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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**KENT COUNTY COLLECTIVE IMPACT INITIATIVE
ENGAGES COMMUNITY IN EFFORTS TO
IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH (October 5, 2012) – Over the past four months, a Steering Committee comprised of Kent County leaders across sectors— from business and philanthropy, to government and nonprofit agencies— has been organizing around a shared goal to improve the well-being of children and families in the county. The effort is spearheaded by the Kent County Family and Children's Coordinating Council (KCFCCC) with the 21 member Steering Committee being co-chaired by Lynne Ferrell of the Frey Foundation and Fred Keller, Chairman and CEO of Cascade Engineering. This group aims to build on and compliment current community efforts, and is leveraging a new, innovative approach known as collective impact in this work.

Collective impact, a powerful strategy used by a number of communities around the country, is the commitment across sectors to a common agenda for solving a social problem through alignment and differentiation of efforts.¹ Collective impact efforts across a range of issues often grow out of the recognition that stakeholders from many sectors (e.g., business, religious institutions, education, etc.) have deep, vested interests in resolving complex social problems. Such solutions depend on addressing a complex range of challenges that can only be improved through a systematic and coordinated approach owned by the cross-sector stakeholders themselves. Indeed, no single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single organization solve it. "As the global competition for talent relentlessly increases, we

need to find solutions for our community to compete. The best way for this to occur is for all of our students to achieve at high levels. Research shows that for our community, there are too many that are faced with significant challenges that we simply must find a way to address. This Collective Impact process allows us to work in new collaborative ways to assure success for all!” notes Fred Keller.

The Kent County Collective Impact Initiative for Children and Families is a new public-private collaboration. The Steering Committee has reached the halfway point of its planning timeline—identifying the critical problems facing children and families in the community, and beginning to define how Kent County will collectively take action. The Committee is now turning to the community to engage in a robust conversation to complete the development of a shared vision for improving the lives of children and families in Kent County.

A forum will be held at Grand Valley State University’s Eberhard Center, next Tuesday, October 9th from noon to 4pm, for members of the community to take part in building this collaborative effort. The forum will include a summary on the Steering Committee’s work to date as well as an opportunity for the community to provide input and feedback. This forum will represent the first major community engagement event for this initiative.

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¹ For a full description of collective impact and examples from across the country, see the article *Collective Impact* in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011. http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact